



Cost-Share Grant to Cook County For Flood Recovery

Featured Project

A \$125,000 grant through the State Conservation Cost-Share Program is being used to repair stream banks and address other erosion and water quality problems that were caused by flooding in Cook County.

A record-setting rainfall event on June 6, 2008 inundated parts of Cook County damaging roads, culverts, and private property. Soils were already saturated from a late spring snow melt when the area around Grand Marais received 5.1 inches of rain during a 13-hour period. The area received 4.81 inches in a 6-hour period and 5.08 inches in a 12-hour -- both records for Grand Marais. Approximately 22 landowners contacted the Cook Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and requested technical and financial assistance to address damages resulting from the storm.

Cook County was included in the Presidential Disaster Declaration of June 25, 2008 and in the USDA Disaster Declaration on September 17, 2008.



Flooding near Croftville Road adjacent to local home. Photo Courtesy of Cook County News-Herald, June 6, 2008.

On September 19, 2008 the Cook County SWCD requested state funds from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) through the State Conservation Cost-Share Program. SWCDs use these state dollars to provide financial and technical assistance to landowners to install state-approved conservation practices. The Cook SWCD developed a work plan that was approved by BWSR staff, which is one of several requirements for receiving these state dollars.



On October 22 -- about one month after the funds were requested -- the BWSR Board approved the \$125,000 grant to the Cook SWCD, and work began on many of the projects in November.

Location: The projects are primarily located along the Devil Track and Little Devil Track Rivers and the City of Grand Marais in Cook County. Both Devil Track and Little Devil Track Rivers discharge to Lake Superior northeast of Grand Marais.

Partners: Cook County SWCD, Cook County, Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program (NPEA) Technical Service Area (TSA) #3.

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Project Timeline: Project design began in November 2008 and construction for many projects was started in spring 2009. The grant contract period is November 1, 2008 through June 30, 2010. Due to the short construction season in northeast Minnesota, construction of some projects is expected to continue through 2011.

Project Costs / Funding Sources: State Cost Share Program Rules provide up to 75 percent of the total eligible costs of a conservation practice, and the remaining costs are paid by the landowner. The \$125,000 is paying for 75 percent of 12 separate projects. The work will include grading and stabilizing stream banks, installing grassed waterways to repair gullies, installing sediment basins to control soil erosion, establishing native vegetation in critical areas for water quality and wildlife habitat, and restoring a trout stream.

Keys to Success: Cook County SWCD's outreach efforts informed property owners of the available technical and financial assistance for implementing erosion and water quality practices to mitigate the flood damages. The SWCD managed the grant funds locally and performed the necessary project management duties to comply with Cost-Share Program requirements.

The NPEA program provides engineering and technical services on a regional basis, which is an efficient way to ensure that projects are designed according to professional standards without requiring every SWCD to have their own licensed engineer. The NPEA TSA #3 provided the necessary technical and engineering design assistance for these flood recovery projects in partnership with the Cook County SWCD.



NPEA TSA #3 Engineer assessing damage near Little Devil Track River.
Photo Courtesy of Cook County SWCD, June 12, 2008.

BWSR roles: Effective administration of the Cost-Share Program by BWSR board members and staff allowed state funds to be available for projects on a short time frame while meeting requirements for accountability and transparency. Specific BWSR duties related to the Cost-Share Program are found in M.S. 103C.501 and MN Rules Chapter 8400.

Measurable Outcomes: All Cost-Share grant recipients are required to estimate pollution reduction outcomes as projects are completed. BWSR tracks these estimated amounts of soil loss prevented and other measurable outcomes in eLINK4Web, an online database administered by BWSR staff. Specific outcomes for these projects is expected to be available in 2010.

For more information: Click on the following Cook County SWCD website for updated information
<http://www.co.cook.mn.us/index.php/soil-and-water>